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DEPT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/RA, G/TIP
NSC STAFF FOR RICK WATERS, PAT DAVIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRIM](#) [KWMN](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY CAIRO ASSESSMENT OF CHILD PROSTITUTION AND
FORCED MARRIAGES AS FACTORS IN TIP IN EGYPT

REF: A. CAIRO 580
[1](#)B. JONES-ABERCROMBIE-WINSTANLEY E-MAIL OF 3/22/2007

Classified by Charge Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Embassy Cairo has met with key Egyptian civil society advocates for women's and children's issues, and has reviewed the available literature on trafficking. We have seen no evidence that confirms that child prostitution and forced or temporary marriages are occurring on any significant, documented scale in Egypt. Considerably more research must be done in order to make a conclusive determination. We have commissioned, through USAID, an assessment on these issues. This assessment will be led by trafficking expert Mohamed Mattar, under a contract with Chemonics, and is scheduled for May-July 2007. It would be premature and counter-productive to downgrade Egypt to Tier 3 on the basis of the extremely limited, anecdotal, and poorly sourced information that is currently available. The GOE, and leading civil society groups closely linked to the GOE, are engaged in the fight against TIP and in protecting Egypt's street children. A Tier 3 determination without thorough documentation will likely make the GOE very reluctant to cooperate with the USG in future efforts to tackle trafficking. End summary.

The Views of Key Activists in Cairo

[1](#)2. (C) The DCM met on March 28 with Ambassador Moushira Khattab, director of the GOE's National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM). Khattab outlined the Council's ongoing efforts to protect street children, but lamented that there has been no research on this at-risk population. The Council is now conducting its own study in cooperation with Cairo University and several NGOs. Khattab expressed surprise that the USG would make any formal determination regarding Egypt in the absence of reliable documentary evidence about child prostitution and temporary marriages. Khattab acknowledged that Egypt faces major child protection challenges and welcomes USG support. But she insisted that she knows of no evidence that would suggest that street children or other minors are being trafficked for prostitution. Khattab also outlined NCCM efforts on broader child protection issues, including regional coordination meetings, assessment studies, and major input into a revised child protection law which will explicitly ban child trafficking.

13. (C) Poloff discussed trafficking issues on March 20 with UNICEF Child Protection Officer Nadra Zaki who said that UNICEF data indicates that abuse, including rape, of street children (by both their peers and by adults) are much more pressing issues than allegations of child prostitution. Zaki noted that a GOE study by the Ministry of Health indicated that some street children engaged in commercial sexual activity, but warned that it was not clear if their clients were other street children or adults. Zaki said that despite the indications of some commercial sexual activity by street children, there was no evidence that this activity was controlled or coordinated by traffickers.

14. (SBU) In a similar vein, the Egyptian Center for the Rights of the Child, in a report sent to Embassy Cairo based on data from 2001-2002, indicated that sexual abuse of street children is a significant problem in Egypt, but was unable to provide any evidence that this involved commercial sexual activity.

15. (C) Abba El-Badry, the director of the Hope Village organization, which operates shelters for street children, told A/IO that there is anecdotal evidence that gangs of youths and young men do engage in detentions and sexual assaults on girls and young women from the street children community. El-Badry noted that there are some unconfirmed reports that kidnappers have prostituted their victims, but said that a survey is needed to understand the extent of the problem and to design solutions.

A Review of Relevant Literature

16. (SBU) A review of the available literature also suggests that reports of child prostitution, and of temporary or forced marriages used to mask prostitution, must be examined critically. For example, a 2001 ECPAT report notes that "there is still insufficient data and awareness concerning the phenomenon." A 2003 ECPAT report on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in North Africa noted that due to cultural taboos, Egyptians were not inclined to admit that child prostitution was a problem, and that CSEC "through prostitution is thus even more difficult to document."

17. (C) ECPAT's most recent country profile for Egypt (available on www.ecpat.net, and which is undated but appears to have been drafted in late 2006) noted that "only limited information is available concerning CSEC in Egypt" and that there is a dearth of "reference resources or previous studies." The statistics that ECPAT does cite to support its contention that "child prostitution in Egypt is significantly spreading" date from 1995-96. ECPAT also asserts that according to "recent research by Dr. Nicholas Ciaccio, associate professor of sociology at AUC, more than 80 percent of the estimated 93,000 street children in Egypt are exploited sexually." Dr. Ciaccio retired from AUC in 2004 and does not appear to have conducted any research since then. Ciaccio has relocated to the USA and has not responded to Embassy queries for clarification of his research. ECPAT also cites an Arabic-language UNICEF study undertaken with the GOE's Ministry of Social Affairs as evidence of child prostitution. According to UNICEF Nadra Zaki, the study in fact focuses strictly on the matter of early marriage of Egyptian girls to foreigners (especially Gulf Arab visitors), and asserts that in 4.4 percent of a sample of 500 families, there was evidence of early marriage to foreigners. UNICEF stressed that this study should not be seen as evidence of a child prostitution problem.

18. (SBU) Cairo's Land Center for Human Rights, one of Egypt's leading human rights NGOs, in a 2007 report, detailed the many child protection issues that Egypt faces, including sexual abuse, domestic violence, parental negligence, and several instances of detentions for domestic servitude. The Land Center did not, however, report any instances of CSEC.

¶9. (SBU) A 2006 IRIN report (Egypt: Minors Sold for Prostitution under the Guise of Marriage") offered anecdotal reports of children "sold" into temporary marriages, but concluded that "few statistics or studies on the matter exist."

U.N. Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography

¶10. (SBU) In a 2004 note addressed to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, the Government of Egypt asserted that there had been no "cases of sex tourism or trafficking of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation abroad." The U.N. Special Rapporteur has not challenged the GOE on this point, neither prior to or subsequent to 2004.

Comment and Recommendations

¶11. (C) Embassy Cairo is working with the GOE and Egyptian civil society to address trafficking and to evaluate the sketchy reports that alleged child prostitution (especially of street children) and temporary marriages are a problem in Egypt. In addition to the above-mentioned Chemonics assessment, USDOL has funded a major new initiative focused on eradicating child labor (implemented by UNICEF and WFP, in close coordination with the GOE) and we are currently working with CEDPA and IREX as they prepare proposals in response to G/TIP's recent solicitation. Egypt clearly does face significant child protection issues. While more information is needed, the evidence available does not lead to a conclusion that Egypt faces problems with CSEC, temporary marriages, or the more lurid allegations that Cairo, Alexandria, and Aswan are sex tourism destinations.

¶12. (C) We anticipate that the planned Chemonics study, headed by the respected Mohamed Mattar of the Johns Hopkins Protection Project, will shed considerable new light on this murky subject. Moreover, we are hopeful that Mattar, will be able to connect with key GOE officials as well as NGO leaders, to build the necessary political will and commitment to tackling trafficking in all its forms. We judge that a downgrade to Tier 3, over the undocumented allegations of

child prostitution and temporary marriages, without more conclusive proof, would generate a strong pushback from the GOE, undermine our credibility, and make future collaboration on this issue much more difficult.

¶13. (C) In order to address possible trafficking in Egypt related to child prostitution and other such issues, we first need to obtain more reliable information. Accordingly, we strongly recommend that the Department not proceed with a downgrade for Egypt to Tier 3 on the basis of the currently available information. If the Chemonics study, or any other studies, document with greater certainty that child prostitution and forced marriages are a significant piece of Egypt's TIP problem, we will be able to engage the GOE on this issue on the basis of facts.

JONES